

SAFE LIFTING & BODY MECHANICS



*Simple Ways to
Protect Yourself*

MOVING CONSUMERS WITH CARE

As a personal care attendant, you may spend a good part of your day lifting and moving consumers. It's not an easy job. Not only do you carry a heavy load, you also may shoulder concerns about the consumer's safety. Fortunately, you can learn simple ways to ensure the consumer's safety and yours, as well. Using the right moving techniques, you can protect your back throughout each day.

BACK PAIN:

Is Avoidable...

Back pain doesn't have to be an unavoidable "side effect" of your job. The problem really starts with improper lifting and moving, which often leads to unnecessary stress on your back, injury, and chronic pain. Then, once you've injured your back, reinjury is much more likely.



YOU CAN GREATLY

Reduce Your Risk of Back Pain...

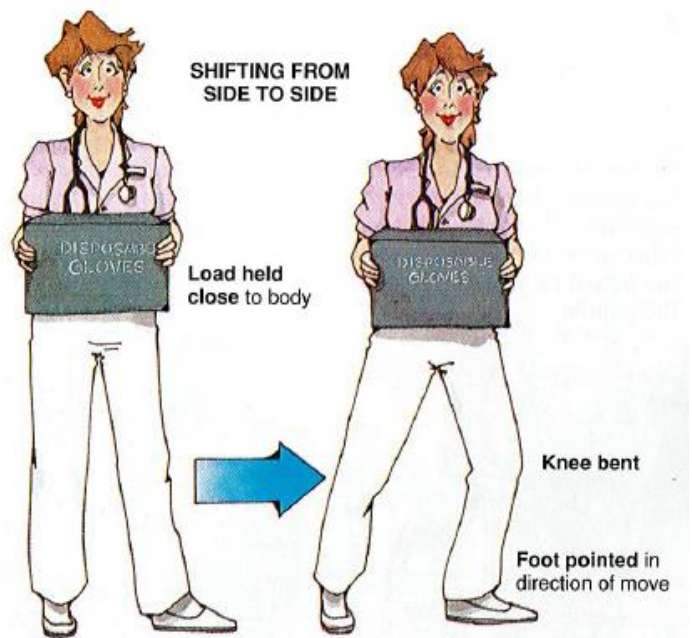
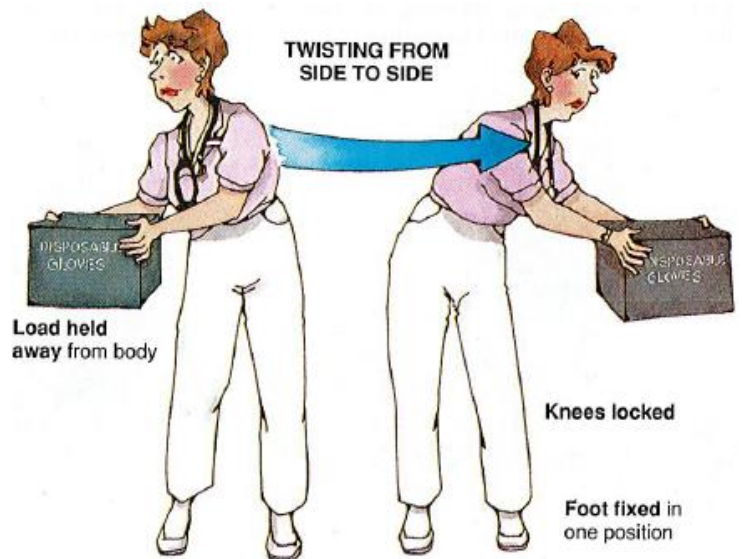
Lifting consumers may be an athletic activity, but big biceps aren't the key to safe lifting. Protecting your back depends on working smarter, not harder. When you learn to move safely and efficiently, you reduce your risk of back pain and improve consumer care and safety at the same time.

Body Mechanics: Maintaining a Balanced Spine

Moving your body correctly is a skill that requires your constant attention. How well you perfect the skill can mean the difference between a fatigued or injured back and a healthy back.

Poor body mechanics

Poor body mechanics is uncoordinated movement that eliminates the balance of your three natural curves, making your spine vulnerable to injury. This often happens when you hold loads far away from your body. Another way it happens is when you keep your feet fixed and twist your spine as you move. Keeping your legs straight also makes your back work harder. All types of poor body mechanics increase the stress on your back and your risk of back pain.



Good body mechanics

Good body mechanics keeps your spine balanced during any kind of movement – even lifting heavy consumers. Holding loads close to your body can minimize the effect of their weight. To prevent twisting injuries, move your torso – from your shoulders to your hips – as one solid unit. And if you keep your knees bent, you'll make your legs work harder, reducing the stress on your back.

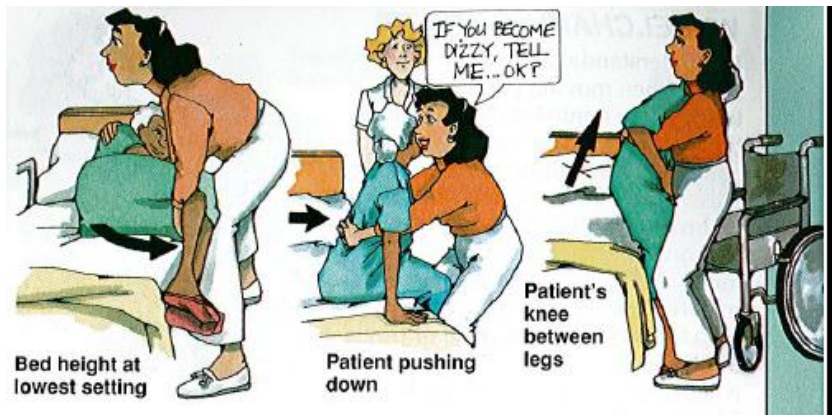
BED TO WHEELCHAIR

This transfer often requires consumers' help, so clear communication is essential. Explain the steps of the move, tell consumers they can rest when they need to, and ask consumers when they are ready to move. You may use a **transfer belt** to provide a firm handhold, rather than clasping your hands behind their backs. Have consumers use their arms to push off the bed and reach for the chair.



REMEMBER THIS:

When consumers are weak, brace your knees against theirs to keep their legs from buckling.

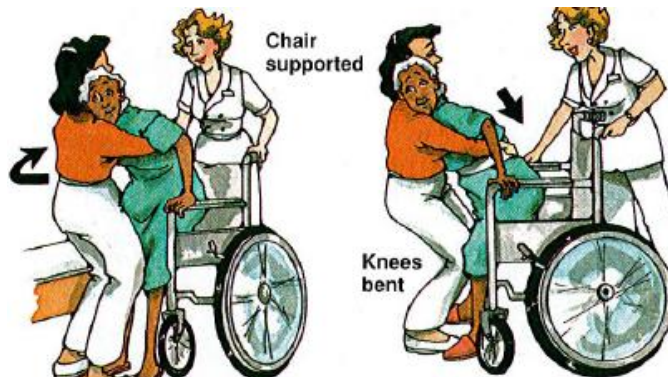


1 Sit the Consumer Up

- Position and lock the wheelchair close to the bed.
- Remove armrest nearest bed and swing away both leg rests.
- Help the consumer turn over.
- Put an arm under the consumer's neck with your hand supporting the shoulder blade; put your other hand under the knees.
- Swing legs over the edge of the bed, helping the consumer to sit up.

2 Stand the Consumer Up

- Have the consumer scoot to the edge of the bed.
- Put your arms around the consumer's chest and clasp your hands behind his or her back.
- Supporting the leg farthest from the wheelchair between your legs, lean back, shift your weight, and lift.



3 Pivot Toward Chair

- Have the consumer pivot toward the chair, as you continue to clasp your hands around the consumer.
- A helper can support the wheelchair or consumer from behind.

4 Sit the Consumer Down

- As the consumer bends toward you, bend your knees and lower the consumer into the back of the wheelchair.
- A helper may position the consumer's buttocks and support the chair.

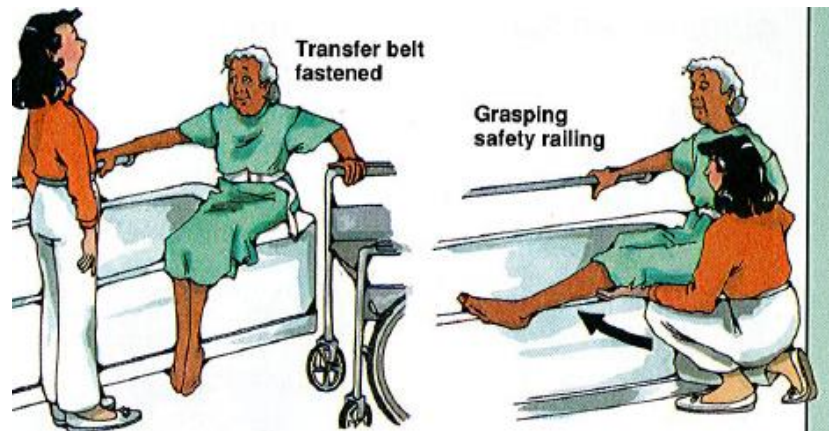
WHEELCHAIR TO TUB

Since your ability to maneuver may be hampered by working within a small space, do what you can to “break up the steps” and to enlist the consumer’s help. Consumers can help by grasping safety railings and taking some weight onto their arms. Using a **tub transfer seat** can make the move easier by allowing consumers to scoot over the tub. It also works well to have consumers sit on the edge of the tub before moving the rest of the way into the tub.



REMEMBER THIS:

Wet consumers are slippery. After the bath, it's safer to dry them off before trying to move them.



1 Move to the Edge

- Fill the tub with water.
- Position the consumer's legs directly underneath and give support as the consumer stands up.
- Have the consumer sit on the edge of the tub or transfer seat.

2 Lift Legs In

- Move the wheelchair out of the way.
- Take the consumer's legs and swing them into the tub—one at a time—as the consumer holds onto the safety railing.



3 Slide Consumer into Tub

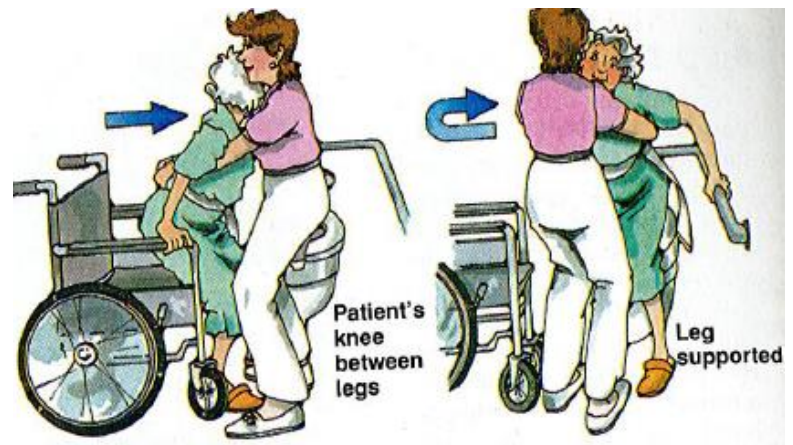
- Brace your legs against the tub and grasp the transfer belt at the consumer's sides.
- Slowly slide the consumer into the tub, making sure not to round your back.

4 Lift Consumer out of Tub

- Let the water out, dry off the consumer, and put a gown back on the consumer.
- With one foot in the tub, grasp the transfer belt, and lift the consumer onto the side of the tub. holds onto the safety railing.

WHEELCHAIR TO TOILET

It's understandable to hurry sometimes when moving consumers to the toilet. Try to minimize the rush (and the risk of injury) by regularly taking consumers to the bathroom. First, make sure there's enough room in the bathroom for the wheelchair. The consumers can often help by sliding to the edge of the chair, pushing up, and taking some weight onto their arms. A consumer who has leg weakness may need a raised toilet seat.



1 Stand the Consumer Up

- Lock the wheelchair. Fasten the transfer belt.
- Help the consumer slide to the edge of the wheelchair.
- Position the consumer's feet directly under his or her body.
- Lift the consumer, grasping the back of the transfer belt.

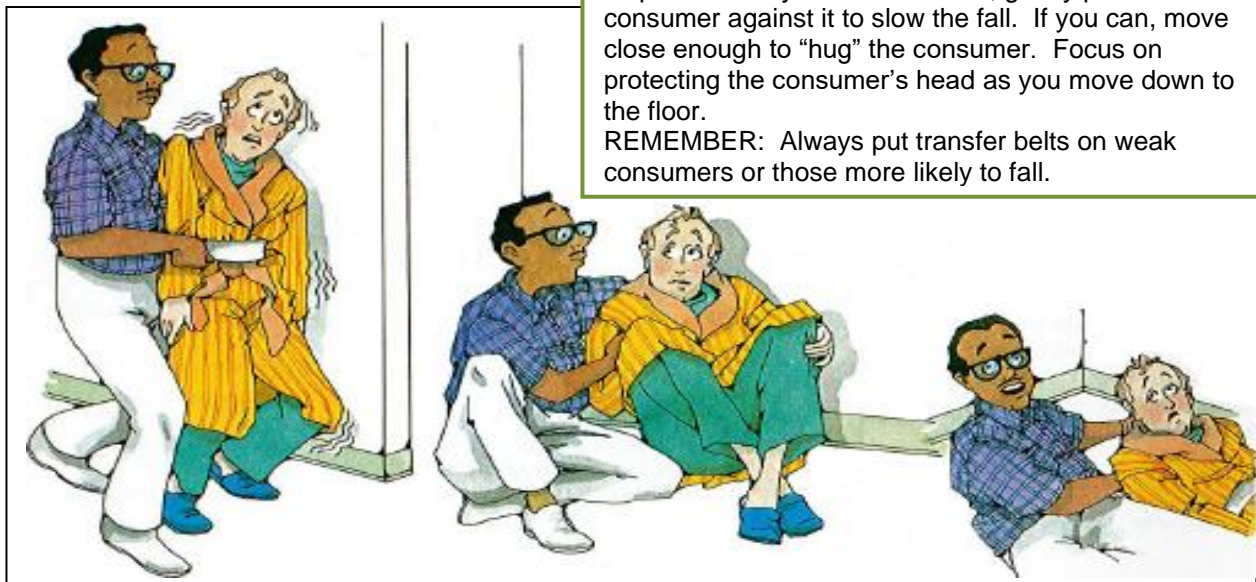
2 Move onto Toilet

- Help the consumer pivot around in front of the toilet, keeping the consumer's knee between your legs.
- Have the consumer grasp each of the safety rails as you slowly and gently sit the consumer down onto the toilet.

IF A CONSUMER FALLS

When a consumer begins to fall, your instinct may be to try to catch him – a difficult and dangerous thing to do. Once the momentum has started, it's almost impossible to stop the fall. And by trying to do so, you can injure your back. Instead, guide the consumer to the ground.

GUIDING THE FALL



Help falling consumers to the floor with as little impact as possible. If you're near a wall, gently push the consumer against it to slow the fall. If you can, move close enough to "hug" the consumer. Focus on protecting the consumer's head as you move down to the floor.

REMEMBER: Always put transfer belts on weak consumers or those more likely to fall.

Consumers

Sit Up in Bed

Tip#1

Make sure the consumer is lying near the side of the bed closest to you before you begin the movement.



- ▲ **Spread your feet.** That will widen your base of support.
- ▲ **Get a solid grip.** Put one arm beneath the consumer's back and gently grasp the consumer's opposite shoulder. Put the other hand on the consumer's knee farthest from where you are standing
- ▲ **Pivot and swing.** In one fluid motion, pivot on the balls of your feet. As you pivot, swing the consumer to an upright position on the edge of the bed.
- ▲ **Keep your back straight and knees bent.** Bending or twisting your back places added strain on your back and can result in injury.

Helping Consumers Stand

- ▲ **Place the consumer's feet firmly on floor.** Make sure the consumer is wearing appropriate non-skid footwear to prevent sliding.



- ▲ **Spread your feet.** Place one foot on either side of the consumer's legs, with one

of your feet about 8-10 inches ahead of the other.

- ▲ **Hands up.** Place the consumer's hands on your waist, if possible, or on the arm of a bedside chair, if the consumer is sitting

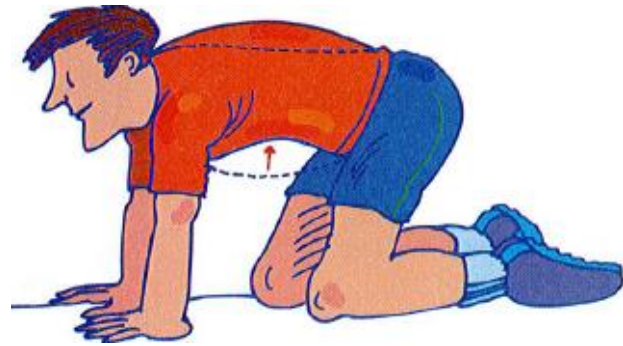
- ▲ **Wrap your arms around the consumer.** Place your arms under the consumer's arms and clasp your hands together behind the consumer's back.

If you're using a lifting belt, grab the back of the belt.

- ▲ **Shift and stand.** Holding the consumer close to you, shift your weight backward. Maintain your back's normal curves and keep your knees bent as you complete this move.



HELPFUL STRETCHES



Exercise #1: Back Stretch

Get down on your hands and knees and slowly arch your back upward. Then relax again slowly. Repeat 5-10 times.

Exercise #2: Knee-Chest Stretch

Lie on a firm surface, with your knees bent and feet flat. Slowly bring one knee at a time toward your chest and hold it there for 5 seconds. Repeat 3 or 4 times.



Exercise #3: Back Stretch

Provide rigid support by placing hands and thumbs against small of back. Gently lean backwards while lifting chest. Hold for a few seconds and return to normal position.

TEN COMMANDMENTS OF BODY MECHANICS

- 1. KEEP A WIDE BASE OF SUPPORT:** Spread your feet apart to make yourself more stable. You may even want to place one foot in front of the other.
- 2. SIZE UP THE LOAD TO BE LIFTED:** Don't attempt to lift alone if you have any doubt about your ability to do so.
- 3. GET HELP IF NEEDED:** If the object is too heavy or if the size or shape of the object is too awkward, ask for help or use some equipment designed to assist in moving heavy loads (such as a cart, dolly, or wheelbarrow). Use team work and use a count, "1-2-3 lift" or "push" when moving an object.
- 4. KEEP THE OBJECT CLOSE TO YOU:** The farther the object is from you, the more pressure you will place on your lower back.
- 5. BEND YOUR KNEES AND HIPS:** Straighten your legs to lift. Keep your back straight (maintaining a normal lumbar curve) and use your stomach muscles to help lift.
- 6. DO NOT TWIST OR BEND SIDEWAYS:** Face the object you are picking up. If you must turn or change direction, pivot your feet rather than twisting your waist.
- 7. PUSH RATHER THAN PULL:** Pushing is much easier on your back than pulling. Brace your hands on the object and use your legs to move the object.
- 8. LIFT SMOOTHLY AS A UNIT:** Avoid strain produced by jerky, uncontrolled movements.
- 9. TAKE YOUR TIME:** Hurrying causes your muscles to act inappropriately and increases the chance of injury.
- 10. CHANGE STRESSFUL POSITIONS FREQUENTLY:** Maintaining any position too long is uncomfortable and can be harmful.

I have read and understand the information provided me, and agree to take responsibility for my safety as well as the consumers'.